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RUEHZN/ENVIRONMENT SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COLLECTIVE
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SIPDIS
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DEPARTMENT FOR OES/IHB, USAID AND EAP
HHS PASS TO CDC AND OGHA
USDA PASS TO APHIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [AMGT](#) [TBIO](#) [KFLU](#) [CASC](#) [AEMR](#) [ASEC](#) [KFLO](#) [KSAF](#)
KPAO, MG, NZ
SUBJ: MGSF01 - SWINE FLU UPDATE FOR NEW ZEALAND

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¶1. (SBU) Summary. There are currently 10 probable cases and 56 suspected cases of Swine Flu in New Zealand, all New Zealanders who returned from Mexico on April 25 via Los Angeles, or who have had contact with them. The GNZ expects the World Health Organization (WHO) lab in Melbourne, Australia to confirm within the next two days whether the 10 probable cases have Swine Flu. The GNZ is urging all incoming airline passengers from North America and Mexico to see a doctor if flu-like symptoms occur and is preparing to issue a travel warning, urging New Zealanders to avoid non-essential travel to Mexico. Embassy Wellington has posted a Swine Flu notice and information update on its website. End Summary.

Swine Flu Makes Big News in NZ

¶2. (SBU) On Saturday, April 25, a group of 22 Spanish language students and three teachers from Rangitoto College (an Auckland high school) returned to Auckland after three weeks in Mexico. The group traveled from Mexico, boarded Air New Zealand Flight 1 in Los Angeles, and landed in Auckland Saturday morning. Upon landing, thirteen students and one teacher experienced flu-like symptoms. Nine or 10 had mild symptoms; and three or four had moderate to severe symptoms and one of that number was hospitalized as a precaution (and was subsequently released). All were tested for Influenza A (of which H1N1, or Swine Flu, is a subset). The results were positive and were forwarded to the WHO lab in Melbourne, Australia for a determination of whether the victims have Swine Flu. The results should be known in a day or two, but NZ health officials say it is "probable" that 10 of the tests will reveal Swine Flu. For that reason, and out of an abundance of caution, health authorities are treating those cases as H1N1 Swine Flu. The ill students and their families are in voluntary quarantine.

¶3. (SBU) Another group of 14 students, two staff members and two parents from Northcote College (another Auckland high school) returned to Auckland from Mexico on Saturday morning via Air New Zealand Flight 5 from Los Angeles, arriving shortly after Flight 1. Three of the students were experiencing flu-like symptoms and were tested for Influenza A, but results were negative.

¶4. (SBU) In addition to the 10 probable Swine Flu cases, the MOH and

local health authorities are presently monitoring 56 other cases in NZ which are "suspected" to be Swine Flu and are located throughout the country. All are being quarantined and all have been given Tamiflu.

None of the Suspected Cases are Severe

15. (SBU) None of the probable or suspected cases are severe. Health Minister Tony Ryall announced that those students who tested positive for Influenza A are all responding well to treatment and their cases are relatively mild. Nevertheless, local NZ health authorities have asked all of the potential victims and their families to stay at home.

The GNZ Response

16. (SBU) The NZ Ministry of Health (MOH) is attempting to contact all passengers on both of the flights (364 passengers on Flight 1 and 269 on Flight 5) and has asked, through the media, that passengers contact NZ health authorities for information. The MOH contacted the Embassy's consular section in Auckland on Tuesday, promising to forward the names of Americans on the two flights. MOH asked the consular section to check its consular records for any contact information it might have for these Americans. As of COB Tuesday, the list of Americans had not been received from the MOH. When and if Post receives the list, we will reach out to any Americans on the list whose contact information we have.

17. (SBU) On Monday, NZ health officials began screening incoming airline passengers from North America and Mexico and are urging them to see a doctor if they experience flu-like symptoms. Prime Minister John Key stated to the media that New Zealanders should

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think carefully before visiting Mexico. According to Nik Kiddle, the NZ Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) official who is directing the Ministry's Swine Flu response, MFAT will be issuing a travel warning later today consistent with the PM's statement. The warning will urge New Zealanders to avoid non-essential travel to Mexico. According to Kiddle, MFAT was motivated to issue the warning after the US Center for Disease Control (CDC) posted a similar warning on its website.

18. (SBU) The MOH reports that it has 1.4 million doses of Tamiflu. NZ health authorities have offered the anti-viral drug to all potentially infected individuals.

Obtaining Information from GNZ Sources Difficult

19. (SBU) The Swine Flu situation in Mexico and the potential spread of the virus to NZ has received prominent front-page coverage in both national papers for the last two days. The MOH hotline is clogged with requests for information, and even MFAT is having difficulty getting briefed on recent developments. According to Kiddle, MFAT is planning to conduct a briefing for the Wellington diplomatic corps, but he has not been able to obtain regular updates from the MOH. Poloff's attempts to obtain information from MOH officials also proved unsuccessful. In Poloff's discussion with MOH Deputy Director for Public Health Fran McGrath, McGrath declined to answer questions. She stated that the MOH is routinely sharing information with the WHO and the US CDC, and the USG should first directly request information from those organizations. If those requests are not answered, McGrath said she would then respond to written inquiries from Embassy Wellington.

Embassy Wellington Response

110. (U) The US Consulate in Auckland has added the following advisory to Embassy Wellington's website:
-- Notice to Americans in New Zealand About Swine Flu:
The US Centers for Disease Control is presently assisting the World Health Organization and Mexican Ministry of Health in responding to

this public health concern. Information concerning swine flu and the epidemiological investigation underway can be found at www.cdc.gov/swineflu. Additional information on swine flu and pandemic influenza can be accessed through www.pandemicflu.gov.

Up-dated information from New Zealand's Ministry of Health is available at <http://www.moh.govt.nz/moh.nsf/indexmh/mexican-swine-influenza-update-270409>.

-- Update: from New Zealand Ministry of Health
If you were a passenger on Air New Zealand Flight NZ1 from Los Angeles arriving in Auckland at FIVE AM on 25/04/2009, the New Zealand Ministry of Health asks you to please contact the Public Health Service urgently to discuss the possible need for protective measures such as antiviral medication.
Anyone who has travelled from Mexico or North America in the last two weeks, especially if you have since developed flu-like symptoms, should contact the Ministry of Health hotline (0800 611 116) for information.

Possible MFAT Request for USG Assistance

11. (SBU) MFAT's Kiddle stated that if Swine Flu is confirmed and the spread of the illness from trans-Pacific air passengers becomes worse, the GNZ may ask the USG to assist in screening the health of passengers before they embark on flights to NZ. Kiddle also mentioned that MFAT would appreciate anything the USG could do to help raise awareness among the Pacific Island Countries who receive direct flights from the US, such as Samoa and the Cook Islands.

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